



(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Happy V-Day!

Students from across America sent Valentine's Day cards and treats to Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers, which arrived at Camp Liberty, Iraq, a couple of days before the big day. The cards and treats were passed out among the troops in the division headquarters building.

Army's Vice Chief of Staff spends time with troops

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1-1 Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP, TAJI, Iraq -- Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Richard A. Cody, took the opportunity to spend some time talking to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers as well as taking an active role in some of the brigade's ceremonies Feb. 13 during a visit here.

In his visit to Taji, Cody presided over the reenlistment of six 1st BCT Soldiers and in another ceremony presented four 1st BCT Soldiers with the combat action badge and two with the combat infantry-

man's badge.

As he began the reenlistment ceremony, Cody said a few words praising the Soldiers who decided to reenlist in the combat zone.

"They're reenlisting because they're great Soldiers and great Americans, absolutely dedicated to this mission," said Cody. "They want to stay here and serve with you and to stay Cav. That speaks volumes to their patriotism and the team work you've built here."

"I'm convinced the reason our reenlistment numbers (throughout the Army) are high and the reason Soldiers stay in the

Army is because of our leaders," he added.

Cody presented the reenlisting Soldiers with pocket knives while giving coins to the combat badge recipients.

Speaking to a gathering of 1st BCT Soldiers immediately after the ceremonies, Cody took the opportunity to praise them for their service.

"You are the most battle hardened Army we've ever had, and the best Soldiers we've had serving in the combat zone," Cody said. "You're the most talented and

General Cody reenlists Soldiers

Visit

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the most patriotic."

Cody added that today's Soldiers have something going for them that was not true of the Soldiers in previous wars such as



Gen. Richard A. Cody (left), Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, pins the combat action badge on the uniform of Sgt. R.J. Price, with HHC, 1st BSTB, during the general's Feb. 13 visit to Camp Taji, Iraq.

Vietnam.

"You're all volunteers and that says something," he said. "We're a strong Army because of all of you."

"You need to know that the Army is behind you, and the people of America are behind you...300 million people are depending on you to defend their freedoms and that makes you special," Cody added. "The Army is proud of you and as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, I could not be more proud of you."

Over the course of his interaction with the troops, Cody took time to joke with Soldiers and presented all of them with coins.

In closing, Cody said one of the things that make the Army successful in accomplishing its mission is the diversity within its military occupational specialties that run a full gamut of career skill sets-citing examples such as cooks, intelligence specialist, cavalry scouts, infantry, field artillery among many others.

"It takes a team," he said. "All of you - everyone of you - are important."

Spc. Raymond Burke, a personnel service specialist for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and a native of



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Gen. Richard A. Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, presides over the reenlistment of six 1st Brigade Combat Team Soldiers during his Feb. 13 visit to Camp Taji, Iraq.

Kenavo, W. Va., who reenlisted during the general's visit, said it was a memorable experience.

"This was a great opportunity," Burke said. "It's not every day a four-star general reenlists you. It was definitely a surprise and something I'll never forget."

Arabic Phrase of the Day

jariida

Defined: newspaper

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

**High: 68
Low: 46**



Tomorrow

**High: 71
Low: 47**



Friday

**High: 65
Low: 48**

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(Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Hearts warmed on Valentine's Day

(Left to right) Soldiers with Headquarters Company, 1st Cavalry Division, Sgt. Jennifer Jones, Sgt. Adrian Tucker, and Staff Sgt. David Cox, read some Valentine's Day cards hand-made by students of different grade levels from across America Feb. 13.

Baghdad in Brief

Multiple explosions hit marketplace, scores killed

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - At least 60 Iraqis died when two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices detonated a short time apart in an east Baghdad marketplace Feb. 12.

The first attack came at approximately 12:45 p.m. in a garage near the Al-Shuraga marketplace.

The explosion set 10 vehicles on fire and did extensive damage to nearby buildings.

The second attack came just minutes later. U.S. and Iraqi Army personnel rushed to the scene and cordoned off the area.

Members of Iraqi emergency services and Iraqi national police rushed more than 100 wounded residents to the Al-Kindi hospital.

The incidents are under investigation.

VTC helps Soldiers stay close to loved ones

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - "Snail mail" is quickly becoming a thing of the past for deployed Soldiers thanks to the 1st Cavalry Division's commitment to keeping families close through video teleconferences (VTCs).

"The guys love using the VTC capabilities here and we stay busy all the time," said Staff Sgt. David Beach, a cable system installer with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, and non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the division's VTC program.

VTC isn't new to Iraq. The 1st Cavalry Division furnished the capability in Operation Iraqi Freedom II, almost four

years ago. It is used for operational purposes, FRG meetings by the command and is a tool to keep Soldiers in contact with loved ones back home. Before this option was available, Soldiers were forced to wait the one to two weeks for a letter in the mail or wait in long lines to use phones.

Though not new, improvements in technology have made VTC operations better.

"Everything is better this time around," said Sgt. Michael Cooper, a common ground station operator with the division's headquarters.

"Now we have a reliable internet, cell phones and we can sign up to use the VTC to see our friends and family back home," added the Killeen, Texas native. "This is a great benefit for all deployed Soldiers."

Using the VTC is simple. It's avail-

able to any Soldier assigned or attached to a 1st Cavalry Division unit.

After a Soldier informs his chain of command, arrangements are made with the family in the rear and a time and date are set. Then, when the time comes, a Soldier simply shows up at the division main headquarters between the hours of 10 p.m. and 9 a.m. Each Soldier gets 15 minutes to speak with loved ones in the "Stetson Room."

"This is an important tool for Soldiers because it builds more moral when they can actually see their loved ones, instead of just speaking with them over phone or internet," said Beach, a native of Chickamauga, Ga.

The division main is averaging 40 VTC's a month. Holidays are the busiest times, Beach added.

USO comes to Baghdad base camp "In Living Color"

By Maj. Sean Ryan
2-2 Inf. PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - The USO-sponsored comedy tour headlining David Alan Grier with fellow comedians Kevin Avery and Kristopher Tinkle was the talk of the FOB here all week, and tickets were in high demand for the Feb. 10 show.

The performers didn't disappoint, as those in the packed house were rolling with laughter after every 30-minute set, with Grier commanding the stage for the last set.

It was definitely an adults only show, as Grier's topics ranged from divorce to running his first and only marathon, and concluding with his soulful 1960s version of "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

Spc. Latoya Roberts, a resident of Anniston, Ala., and personnel clerk, said she was really excited about the show.

"I was shocked to find out the comedians were coming to FOB Loyalty since it has a reputation of being dangerous due to constant mortar fire. The show was very entertaining and I thought David Alan Grier was a real people person," she said. "He even gave me the same t-shirt he was

wearing on stage."

Grier, despite being nominated in 1981 for a Tony Award for his portrayal of Jackie Robinson, found his greatest success in the 1990s television series, "In Living Color," which produced other Hollywood stars such as Jim Carrey, Jennifer Lopez and Jamie Foxx.

The former Detroit native and graduate of the University of Michigan was approached by the USO to come to Iraq to visit the troops and convinced both Avery and Tinkle to join him. Grier said he tricked Avery to come here but said the comedians are close friends, despite Avery's reluctance to fly.

The flight was extra long for Grier, as he had recently flown coast-to-coast in the states before leaving on his current trip. Grier said he currently has a few individual projects going on, to include working on his own production company and has worked with both Avery and Tinkle in the past.

Tinkle, an unlikely substitute teacher based out of San Francisco, started the show and discussed his students, lack of knowledge on most subjects teachers should know and a lack of a monogamous relationship.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Lee, an engineer with the 2nd BCT and resident of Clanton, Ala., thought it was a great show and a tremendous boost for morale. Lee said the show really gave the Soldiers something to do besides the typical missions and never thought a big-time entertainer like Grier, would come to Iraq. He was really impressed with Tinkle as well, though he had not heard of him before.

"Everyone I talked to had a great time and really enjoyed the show," he said.

Avery, who grew up in the San Francisco area and later moved to Alabama, attended Tuskegee University. He studied drama, but came back to comedy after he couldn't remember his lines in serious roles and found himself improvising. His act contained bits about trying to be more of a thug in Oakland and having a voice that didn't coincide with his race.

After the show, the three relaxed with the Soldiers on stage and conducted a



(Photos by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

David Alan Grier performs for a packed house at Forward Operating Base Loyalty in eastern Baghdad Feb. 10 as part of a USO comedy tour.

meet-and-greet to sign autographs and take photos. After the meet-and-greet, Grier and company went to the dining facility and enjoyed ice cream before their flight, and said they were extremely pleased to be a part of the tour and perform for the Soldiers.

Some Soldiers, just in from missions, had to do double-takes and couldn't believe they were hanging out with the three entertainers while eating a late dinner.



David Alan Grier 'high-fives' a Soldier at Forward Operating Base Loyalty before performing Feb. 10.



Comedians Kevin Avery, David Alan Grier, and Kristopher Tingle sign autographs before their show for Spc. Latoya Roberts at Forward Operating Base Loyalty Feb. 10.

'Weird Al' wannabe in east Baghdad

By Spc. Courtney Marulli
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - During deployments, many Soldiers turn to music as a way to pass the time and unwind after a long mission. Some sing, others compose music, while others play with whatever musical instrument they have to play.

The guitar is a popular instrument in deployment zones, but for one noncommissioned officer, his guitar got replaced with something more unusual; the accordion.

Sgt. 1st Class Ricardo A. Herrera, a battle NCO for Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, is a self-taught musician of various talents, but his latest venture is playing the accordion to Conjunto music.

"I just like the way it sounds and it's challenging," he said.

Herrera, of Nipomo, Calif., said as a Mexican-American, he was exposed to Hispanic music and culture growing up and his love for the sound stayed with him. He said he enjoys Tejano music, but it wasn't until his military career led him to Fort Hood, Texas, that he became interested in Conjunto music.

Conjunto means a group, or together,



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Ricardo A. Herrera, with HHT, 3rd Squad., 61st Cav. Regt., plays his accordion during his down time.

Herrera said, and that is where the accordion comes in. A Conjunto consists of an accordion player, a bass player, a drummer and a bajo sexto player.

The Conjunto style of music started in the 1800s when German settlers moved to northern Mexico and southern Texas areas.

"They brought polka music with them," he said.

The mixture of polka and traditional Mexican music fused into what is now known as Conjunto. Herrera said it sounds like a Hispanic polka with Spanish lyrics.

"Anywhere in South Texas you can find it," he said.

Herrera has been in the Army for 18 years and plans on retiring in San Antonio where he can enjoy the form of music that he loves the most.

As a child, Herrera played the guitar and other instruments by teaching himself.

As a teenager, Herrera played in a few bands, all of different genres. He said he had always played the guitar, bass guitar and drums, but when he became interested in Conjunto, he wanted to be the lead.

"I chose it because the accordion in this style of music is more or less the lead guitar," he said. "The drums and bass are not quite as complex, so it wasn't a challenge. I wanted to be lead guitar, so I picked up the accordion."

Herrera is quick to point out that his accordion is not like the one "Weird Al" Yankovic uses, which is a piano accordion.

"I use a button accordion," he said.

A button accordion varies from the piano accordion because it has several buttons instead of keys for notes.

"It's a little smaller and sounds a bit different," he said.

Herrera has been playing the accordion for six years. He said it takes a lot of practice to be able to play and not look at the buttons.

TELEVISION



	8:00p.m.	8:30p.m.	9:00p.m.	9:30p.m.	10:00p.m.	10:30p.m.	11:00p.m.
AFN sports	College Gamenight	NFL Live	Sports Center		Sports Center		NBA- Knicks at Lakers
AFN prime ATLANTIC	Prime News Tonight		NBC Nightly News	ABC World News with Charles Gibson	Seasme Street		The View
AFN news	Special Report with Brit Hume		Your World with Neil Cavuto		World News Now		ATS/Regional News